

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 04987 261806Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SAB-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 COME-00 DOTE-00 EB-08 FMC-01 CG-00
DLOS-09 OES-07 MCE-00 /107 W
-----127859 261812Z /64

P 261657Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8202
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY PANAMA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BOGOTA 4987

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, MASS, CO
SUBJ: PRESIDENT LOPEZ SPEAKS ON COLOMBIA'S PANAMA
CANAL TRANSIT RIGHTS, ITS MARITIME LIMITS POLICY
AND THE PORTUGUESE' CORVETTE SALE

1. SUMMARY: IN A MAJOR ADDRESS ON COLOMBIAN NAVAL AND
MARITIME POLICIES, PRESIDENT LOPEZ STATED THAT COLOMBIA
HAD NOT SACRIFICED ANY OF ITS TRANSIT RIGHTS THROUGH THE
PANAMA CANAL. HE DEFENDED HIS GOVERNMENT'S RECORD IN
DELIMITING ITS SEA FRONTIERS AGAINST CHARGES BY A U.S.
SENATOR THAT COLOMBIA HAD EMERGED AS AN "IMPERIALIST AND
VORACIOUS" CARIBBEAN POWER. HE ALSO SPOKE OUT AGAINST
CRITICS OF COLOMBIA'S INTENTION TO ACQUIRE FOUR PORTUGUESE
CORVETTES AND HOPED THAT THE SALE WOULD STILL GO THROUGH.
END SUMMARY.

2. CANAL TRANSIT RIGHTS. IN AN ADDRESS ON MAY 24 TO THE
GRADUATING CLASS AT THE COLOMBIAN NAVAL ACADEMY IN CARTAGENA,
PRESIDENT LOPEZ FOCUSED ON SEVERAL COLOMBIAN POLICY AREAS
WHICH HAVE BEEN THE TARGETS OF LOCAL CRITICS. IN REPLY TO
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 04987 261806Z

CHARGES THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN REMISS IN DEFENDING
COLOMBIA'S RIGHTS WITH REGARD TO THE PANAMA CANAL WHICH ARE
GUARANTEED BY THE US UNDER THE 1914 THOMSON-URRUTIA TREATY,
LOPEZ POINTED OUT THAT THIS INVOLVED THE PANAMA RAILWAY. HE
EXPLAINED THAT COLOMBIA HAD MERELY LOST THE RIGHT TO WAIT
ON LINE WITH THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER NATIONS TO USE A
ONE HUNDRED YEAR OLD RAILROAD, IN THE EVENT THAT THE CANAL

ITSELF WAS PUT OUT OF USE BY A NUCLEAR ATTACK. WITH REGARD TO THE ALLEGED LOSS BY COLOMBIA OF THE POSSIBILITY OF A SEA LEVEL CANAL THROUGH ITS TERRITORY, LOPEZ STATED THAT MANY STUDIES HAD PROVED THAT SUCH A CANAL WOULD BE ECONOMICALLY, TECHNICALLY AND STRATEGICALLY UNFEASIBLE. HE THEN ASSERTED THAT ARTICLE 12 OF THE PANAMA CANAL TREATY WHICH GUARANTEED THAT ANY FUTURE ISTHMIAN CANAL WOULD BE CONSTRUCTED THROUGH PANAMA HAD BEEN AMENDED OUT OF THE FINAL TREATY BY AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE U.S. AND PANAMA. LOPEZ ASKED THAT CRITICS, "WHO HAVE ENOUGH TIME ON THEIR HANDS TO STUDY SUCH MATTERS, NOT REQUIRE OTHERS, WHO HAVE MANY RESPONSIBILITIES, TO WASTE TIME IN REFUTING THE CRITICS' ARGUMENTS WHICH ARE MERELY THE FRUIT OF THEIR IGNORANCE".

3. COLOMBIA'S MARITIME LIMITS. LOPEZ REMARKED THAT IN A RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOK AN UNNAMED US SENATOR HAD DESCRIBED COLOMBIA AS AN "IMPERIALIST, VORACIOUS AND COVETOUS" POWER IN THE CARIBBEAN. LOPEZ TOLD HIS LISTENERS THAT COLOMBIA HAD DONE NOTHING MORE THAN THE US AND CANADA HAD ALREADY DONE BY EXTENDING ITS SEA LIMITS TO 200 MILES. THE DIFFERENCE WAS, LOPEZ WENT ON, THAT WHILE THE US AND CANADA COULD EXTEND THEIR FRONTIERS WITHOUT INTERRUPTION, COLOMBIA DURING HIS ADMINISTRATION HAD NEGOTIATED A SERIES OF DELIMITATION TREATIES WITH MOST OF ITS MARITIME NEIGHBORS, THEREBY GREATLY INCREASING COLOMBIA'S HERITAGE. HE ALLUDED TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT BEFORE THE END OF HIS ADMINISTRATION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 04987 261806Z

ON AUGUST 7, STILL ANOTHER SUCH TREATY MIGHT BE SIGNED.

4. THE PORTUGUESE CORVETTES. THE COLOMBIAN SENATE, LOPEZ CONTINUED, HAD SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED THE GOC TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY NAVAL FORCES TO ASSERT COLOMBIA'S JURISDICTION OVER THE NEWLY ACQUIRED MARITIME AREA. AFTER REMARKING ON THE "OBSCULENT AND ANACHRONISTIC" NATURE OF COLOMBIA'S PRESENT NAVAL FORCES, LOPEZ EXPLAINED THAT COLOMBIA HAD REVIEWED A NUMBER OF SHIP ACQUISITION POSSIBILITIES AND HAD DETERMINED THAT THE PORTUGUESE CORVETTE DEAL WAS THE MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO COLOMBIA BECAUSE OF THE PRICE, AVAILABILITY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SHIPS. LOPEZ DERIDED PRESS COMMENT THAT THE CORVETTES WERE OBSOLETE BY INFORMING HIS AUDIENCE THAT THEY POSSESSED "TORPEDO TUBES STILL UNDER LICENSE BY THE US WHOSE GOVERNMENT HAS ADVISED US THAT, IF WE ACQUIRE THESE VESSELS, WE WILL HAVE TO SUBSCRIBE TO AGREEMENTS WHICH ARE PROPER TO THIS KIND OF SECRET MILITARY WEAPONS, SUCH AS NOT PARTICIPATING IN WARS OF AGGRESSION AND NOT UTILIZING THEM IN WARS OF CONQUEST AGAINST OUR NEIGHBORS IN THE AMERICAS. LOPEZ ALSO REJECTED, "CHOLERICALLY AND INDIGNANTLY", PRESS INSINUATIONS THAT A BRIBE OF 100 MILLION COLOMBIAN PESOS (ABOUT US \$2.5 MILLION) HAD BEEN OFFERED TO THE CORVETTE NEGOTIATORS.

THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT THE SALE WAS HELD UP BECAUSE OF THE GREATLY INCREASED DEMAND FOR THIS TYPE OF VESSEL, DUE TO THE UNSETTLED MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN WATERS FOR WHICH THE SHIPS HAD BEEN CONSTRUCTED, AND THAT AS A CONSEQUENCE THE PRICE HAD GONE UP. LOPEZ HOPED THAT PORTUGAL WOULD RECONSIDER ITS POSITION AND WOULD AGREE TO SELL THE CORVETTES TO COLOMBIA AT THE ORIGINALLY AGREED UPON PRICE.

5. COMMENT: PRESIDEN LOPEZ, A NAVY BUFF, APPARENTLY TOOK THE OCCASION OF HIS FINAL APPEARANCE AT A NAVAL ACADEMY GRADUATION, BEFORE THE END OF HIS MANDATE, TO AIR HIS VIEWS ON NAVAL AND MARITIME AFFAIRS. IN PARTICULAR, HE SEEMS TO HAVE SEIZED ON THE OTHERWISE OBSCURE (AT LEAST IN COLOMBIA) REMARKS OF A US SENATOR, WHICH PURPORTEDLY CRITICIZE A CHERISHED ACCOMPLISHMENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 04 BOGOTA 04987 261806Z

MENT OF HIS FOREIGN POLICY, THE EXTENSION OF COLOMBIA'S SEA FRONTIERS, IN ORDER TO ONCE AGAIN REMIND COLOMBIANS OF HIS ADMINISTRATIONS ACHIEVEMENTS IN THIS FIELD. LOPEZ ALSO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO REFUTE CRITICISMS THAT HE HAD BEEN LESS THAN ASSIDUOUS IN DEFENDING COLOMBIA'S PANAMA CANAL TRANSIT RIGHTS. SUCH CRITICISMS HAVE NOT BEEN PARTICULARLY DAMAGING TO HIM SINCE THE ARGUMENTS ARE ARCANE, EVEN FOR INFORMED COLOMBIANS, BUT HE HAS OBVIOUSLY BEEN NETTLED BY THEM. ALTHOUGH THE NAVY IS THE COLOMBIAN SERVICE CLOSEST TO LOPEZ' HEART, IT HAS NOT MATERIALLY BENEFITED BY HIS ASSOCIATION. LOPEZ' EXTENDED DEFENSE OF THE POSSIBLE CORVETTE ACQUISITION MAY INDICATE THAT HE WANTS TO REPAIR THIS NEGLECT OF THE RECOGNIZED STEP SISTER OF THE COLOMBIAN ARMED SERVICES, AS WELL AS ASSURE THAT COLOMBIA HAS THE NAVAL MEANS TO EXERCISE JURISDICTION OVER THE MARITIME AREA THAT HIS ADMINISTRATION HAS WON FOR COLOMBIA. END COMMENT.

6. COPY OF LOPEZ ADDRESS POUCHED TO ARA/AND.
ASENCIO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MARITIME LAW, TERRITORIAL SEA LIMIT, CANALS, MILITARY SALES, NAVAL SHIPS, DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BOGOTA04987
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780223-0500
Format: TEL
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780516/aaaaandg.tel
Line Count: 155
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a2663096-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2557639
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT LOPEZ SPEAKS ON COLOMBIA'S PANAMA CANAL TRANSIT RIGHTS, ITS MARITIME LIMITS POLICY AND THE PORTUGUESE' CORVETTE SALE
TAGS: PBOR, MASS, CO, PQ, (LOPEZ MICHELSEN, ALFONSO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a2663096-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014